



For Immediate Release
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BAUCUS, HATCH READY FOR COLOMBIA, PANAMA FTA BILL NEGOTIATIONS TO START

*Finance Leaders Ask Kirk to Immediately Begin Technical Discussions on Colombia and Panama FTA
Implementing Bills*

Washington, DC – Senate Finance Committee Chairman Max Baucus (D-Mont.) and Ranking Member Orrin Hatch (R-Utah) called on U.S. Trade Representative Ron Kirk today to immediately begin technical discussions with the Finance Committee on legislation to implement the U.S.-Colombia and U.S.-Panama Free Trade Agreements (FTA). Baucus and Hatch held a [Finance Committee hearing yesterday](#) where they asked Kirk to provide detail on further actions the Administration is seeking from Colombia and Panama and a timetable for resolving any outstanding concerns, pursuant to [a letter the Senators sent Kirk](#) on February 14.

At yesterday's hearing, Kirk told the Committee the additional steps the Administration is seeking from Colombia and Panama do not require modifications to the trade agreements themselves.

The text of the letter from Senators Baucus and Hatch follows below.

March 10, 2011

Ambassador Ron Kirk
United States Trade Representative
600 17th Street NW
Washington, DC 20508

Dear Ambassador Kirk:

Thank you for your March 9, 2011 testimony before the Senate Finance Committee. We appreciate your expressions of support for the U.S.-Colombia and the U.S.-Panama Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) and your acknowledgement of the progress that has been made in both countries. But we are disappointed that you were unable to provide any detail on further actions the Administration is seeking from either country or a specific timetable for resolving any outstanding concerns, as we requested in our February 14th letter.

Still, we are pleased to learn that you are not seeking any modifications to the trade agreements themselves. Since this is the case, we urge you and your team, in addition to our continuing technical discussions on the Korea FTA implementing bill, to meet with our staff to immediately begin technical discussions on the implementing bills for the Colombia and Panama FTAs. We believe that beginning this process will help remove doubt from our trading partners that Congress and the Administration are committed to moving these agreements expeditiously once you resolve the outstanding issues. And we

believe that it will empower your negotiators to complete their work on outstanding issues as soon as possible.

Again, thank you for your testimony. We hope you will authorize your staff to accept our invitation to immediately begin technical discussions on the Colombia and Panama FTA implementing bills.

Sincerely,

Max Baucus
Chairman

Orrin Hatch
Ranking Member

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